

Request for Proposal for Exhibit Design

The Swedish Furnituremaker's of Rockford

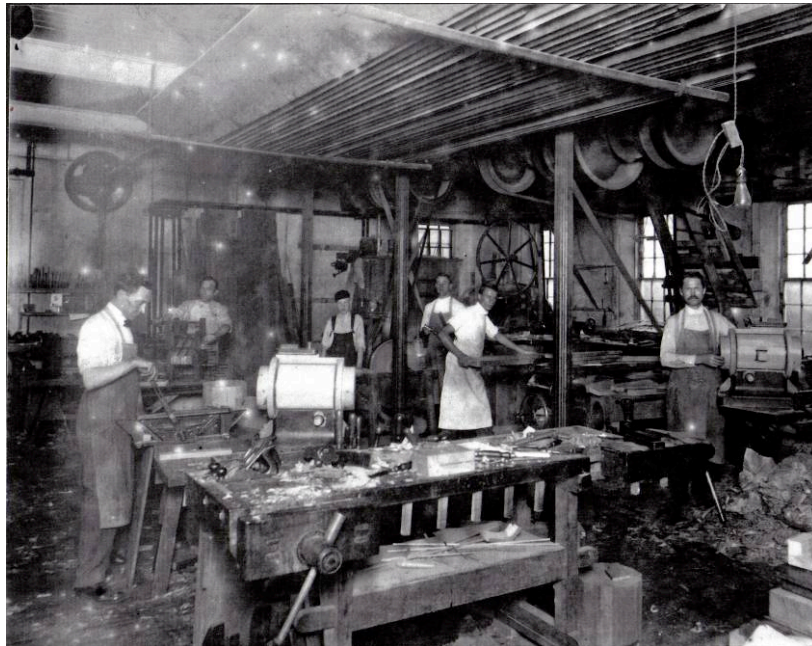
Solicited by:

Midway Village & Museum Center

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Rockford, IL 61107

www.midwayvillage.com



Midway Village & Museum Center
Swedish Furnituremakers' Exhibit
Request for Proposals for Exhibit Master Plan

PLEASE NOTE: All information contained in this RFP is confidential and may not be shared with other vendors or institutions without the permission of Midway Village & Museum Center.

I. Project Background and Overview

Midway Village & Museum Center is making a Request for Proposals for the conceptual design for a new 5000 square foot permanent exhibition on Rockford's furniture industry. The exhibit will focus on the people who built and worked in the furniture industry, especially the immigrant Swedes who started coming to Rockford in 1852 and dominated the industry throughout most of its 75 year history.

Midway Village & Museum Center opened in 1974. In the last thirty years it has grown from seven acres and a single 10,000 square foot building to 137 acres and thirty-two structures. The campus includes a turn-of-the-twentieth century historical village and a fifty-two thousand square foot Museum Center containing twelve thousand square feet of exhibit space. The Museum staff has evolved from an all-volunteer force to a paid staff of nine full-time and 14 part-time people. Five staff people have master's degrees and professional museum training. The Museum recently adopted new vision and mission statements, and new learning objectives, which are appended on a separate page.

In 2002-2003, the Museum Board and staff worked with Lord Cultural Resources on a new Master Plan for the Museum. This planning was in conjunction with a proposal to build a replica furniture factory in Midway Village with the object of maximizing the opportunity provided by this expansion to attract a new audience. The plan's result called instead for a new addition to the Museum Center for an immersive exhibit experience about Rockford's furniture industry. According to the Lord Cultural report, the Museum's audience should include more local residents and their families and friends, school children, and day visitors to Rockford. The new exhibit will serve as a magnet to attract this audience.

As part of the planning process, the Museum staff and Board visited several museums to learn about current standards of practice. Among the museums that most impressed the staff and Board was the immersive experience at the First Division Museum at Cantigny in Wheaton, Illinois. Based on the Lord Cultural Resources Report and these site visits, there emerged a plan for an exhibit that is described below and for which Midway Village is now ready to begin the planning process

II. Historical Background and Exhibit Concept

Rockford has passed through several phases in its manufacturing history. Furniture making was one such phase. No furniture factories remain in Rockford today, but from the 1870s to the 1950s furniture factories were common. Furniture was the economic engine that drove Rockford. Other manufacturers of cabinet hardware and woodworking tools began operations to support them. Many of these manufacturers outlasted the furniture industry.

The Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed that city's furniture industry and provided stimulus to the rise of furniture making in Rockford. The industry was dominated by Swedish immigrants. Prior to 1893, groups of immigrant craftsmen formed cooperative factories. The economic downturn of 1893 ruined many of these co-ops, but many more were saved by the unique business skills of P.A. Peterson. Peterson was himself a Swedish immigrant and had helped establish the industry by hard work and his personal integrity. Economic realignments within the country in the years after the turn of the Twentieth Century resulted in wage pressures and raw material shortages that eventually forced the industry out of Rockford. By the 1950s the furniture factories were nearly all silent and machine tools had come to dominate the Rockford manufacturing economy.

Midway Village & Museum Center intends to create a new exhibit that explores this industry, focusing on the period at the turn of the Twentieth Century. It will concentrate on the men who founded it and worked in it, and its impact on Rockford and the nation. The exhibit will become a focal point for the Museum Center, attracting a new and expanded audience.

We envision the following exhibit areas:

- Multimedia theatre for orientation to the Swedish Furnituremakers' Exhibit and for possible rental use.
- Recreated factory floor
- Shopworker's home
- Furniture showroom
- "Hands-on" workshop/classroom

The story of Rockford's Swedish Furniture Makers will not be just another traditional museum exhibit. It will be an immersive environment utilizing realistic recreations, state of the art multimedia, sound and lighting. Visitors will enter *into* it – literally "stepping back in time" – to explore a specific story with broad connections to the overall story of immigration and industry in Rockford and the United States.

Imagine something like this. On a recreated factory floor belts and pulleys spin along the ceiling connecting to the large machines that saw and mill the raw materials that will become fine



furniture. Sawdust and wood shavings litter the floor. Insects attracted by the animal glues used in the manufacturing process peak from the corners. Work light floods in through dirty windows and skylights and bare bulbs hang from the ceiling. Integrated within these elements are more traditional didactic displays and interactives. Workmen engaged in various activities populate the area. Their stories will be the focal point. What was it like to work in such a place? Was it dangerous? Did they accept these working conditions or were there struggles for better conditions? What was their stake in these

places of business? Did they have unions and pensions and health insurance like many modern industrial workers do? What were the fruits of their labor? What did they have to look forward

to at the end of the day? From the exhibit visitors will understand the history of the furniture industry and the immigrant labor that made it possible. They will appreciate the struggles that Rockford's Swedish immigrants went through in order to assimilate into American society and building upon the example of the Swedes gain a greater understanding of the experiences of other immigrant groups.

This description is Midway Village's vision of the exhibit but we know it can be even better than we imagine. That's why we are excited to begin work with creative people who can bring their own ideas and experience into the process and help us make our vision a reality.

PHOTOS: (above) Standard Pattern Works, Rockford, Illinois, about 1890. (right) The kitchen of a working class family (Library of Congress)



III. Target Audiences

The exhibit must appeal to a general audience and also serve the needs of teachers of social studies in grades 5 and 8.

The most important characteristic of Rockford's population, and hence its general audience pool, is education. This presents a challenge to Midway Village's ability to develop an audience. General visitor studies have concluded that those people most likely to be regular users of museums are highly educated professionals. Unfortunately, Rockford has a relatively low number of persons with 4 or more years of college education and the strong manufacturing base of its economy requires fewer skilled and professional workers. Only 18.5% of Rockford's population has four or more years of college. The national average is 25.2%. This means Midway Village has a smaller than usual pool of people that fit the description of "traditional" museum goers.

Among those that are in the much larger pool of non-traditional museum users, specific conditions must be present if they are to be attracted to the museum. Surveys of the potential audience in and around Rockford have determined that if people choose to try any new experience (like visiting Midway Village & Museum Center) they are more likely to do so with their peers. They want opportunities for group activities and socializing -- there must be "things to do." All these conditions must be present in the new exhibit if the museum hopes to attract people from this group. Focus groups have indicated a need to increase the quality and depth of Midway Village exhibits so that they meet the expectations of visitors who can easily find a wide variety of high quality leisure-time activities in other venues. The new exhibit must be inviting and fun. Visitors have told us that when they come to the Museum they want a "wow" experience. Accommodation will be made for these conditions in the new exhibit.

In addition, the exhibit environment must facilitate informal learning and avoid too many "in-your-face" didactic displays. There is a need to address the different ways in which people absorb information (Multiple Intelligence theory). Traditionally, exhibits at Midway Village have focused too much on static artifacts and text to convey information, pitching too much to

linguistic and spatial learners at the expense of those who, for example, learn best through manipulatives (kinesthetic and logical-mathematical learners). The museum is boring for people who are not reader/observers.

The exhibit must also address the curriculum needs of teachers striving to meet Illinois state social studies standards for grades 5 and 8. School groups in these grades will be more likely to visit the exhibit if it can be used as a direct tie to classroom learning. Studies have shown that Midway Village attracts fewer school groups than it could and part of the Museum's growth strategy includes increasing the attendance figures in this category.

IV. Intended Project Outcomes and Measures of Success

When it is finally completed, the Swedish Furnituremakers' Exhibit is expected to result in the following:

- Creation of an immersive exhibit that will convey the essence of the history of Rockford's Furniture Industry and the immigrant labor that made it possible.
- Elevation of Midway Village & Museum Center exhibits to a new level of design, professionalism and impact on our audience.
- More responsiveness in the Museum's exhibits to the needs and desires of our community through the employment of a multiple intelligence approach in the exhibit design.
- Further improvement in Museum Center exhibits by drawing new sponsorships for other exhibits.
- A stronger link between the Museum Center and the Village.

The success of the exhibit will be measured by the following:

- Compliance with the results of front-end and formative evaluations conducted as a part of the design process.
- An increase in attendance to the Museum Center by attracting and appealing to Rockford's non-traditional museum audience.
- Effectiveness in conveying the exhibit's learning objectives.
- Adherence to the State of Illinois' curriculum standards for social studies regarding immigration, Illinois history and the history of the industrial revolution in the United States.

V. Project Budget

The exhibit will be housed in an addition to the Museum Center totaling roughly 5000 square feet. The exhibit has an estimated average budget amount of \$200 per square foot, including design costs. It is expected that some areas of the exhibit (theatre space, workshop, furniture showroom) may cost considerably less than this amount, leaving approximately \$325 per square foot for the core immersive areas of the exhibit.

The Museum has in hand 50% of the expected total cost of the project. A capital campaign to raise the remaining funds will commence in April of 2005. Full development and implementation of the exhibit design are dependent on the successful completion of the campaign.

VI. Project Scope

The Exhibit Designer selected for this project will develop the conceptual design (master plan) for an integrated, immersive exhibit experience for Midway Village & Museum Center visitors. The Designer is charged with the design of all exhibit and exhibit-related areas including any audio-visual or interactive components. As mentioned above in Section II, the Museum envisions five spaces within a new addition to the Museum Center building. These include a multimedia theatre, recreated factory floor, shopworker's home, furniture showroom and hands-on workshop/classroom.

The Designer will work in partnership with the Museum-selected Architect, and under the supervision of the Museum's designated Project Manager. The project Architect will be responsible for the design and construction of a building addition that accommodates the needs of the exhibit.

Completion of the entire exhibit project is expected to be a 3-phase process. For the purposes of this RFP, only the 1st phase concluding with the completion of a master plan for the exhibit is being solicited. It is hoped that the relationship between the Designer and the Museum that is forged during the phase one process will continue into phases two (Design Development Phase) and three (Construction and Installation Phase) as the necessary funds to complete the project become available. However, selection as Designer for the first phase of the project does not guarantee selection for subsequent phases.

The responsibilities of the Designer for phase one of the project are as follows:

Phase 1: Preliminary Design Phase – commences within 30 days of receipt of the signed contract.

1. Designer will review Museum's concept and goals to reaffirm and establish the full scope of the project
2. Designer will evaluate the proposed schedule and budget as they apply to the scope of the project.
3. Designer, working with the Museum, will pre-test the Museum's intended audience to determine its understanding of the topic and comfort level with specific exhibit techniques.
4. Designer will prepare plans and renderings that illustrate the key components of the exhibit, the relationships between them, and how they will be integrated into existing Museum Center spaces and operation.
5. Designer will develop a preliminary budget for developing and installing the exhibit based on the approved concept drawings. This budget should provide line item totals for major design, fabrication and installation categories. This document will be used for fundraising purposes.
6. Designer will develop a projected exhibit construction schedule for developing and installing the exhibit noting major deadlines and expected completion dates for major project components.

At the conclusion of the Preliminary Design Phase the Museum and Designer will have completed a master plan of the exhibit including concept drawings, proposed budget and projected schedule of completion

Additional Responsibilities

1. All information regarding the planning for or funding of this exhibit, as well as information about the design or status of its implementation will remain confidential throughout the course of the project and should not be shared with other institutions or vendors without the permission of Midway Village & Museum Center.
2. The Museum assumes full ownership of any plans and documents generated at any point of the design process.
3. The design of the exhibit will comply with all national, state and local regulations pertaining to accessibility, health and safety.
4. The Designer will verify all Museum or Architect supplied information bearing on the final design or installation of the exhibit, or affecting the proposed budget and construction timeline.
5. The Designer will provide estimated schedules for maintenance of proposed exhibit components and provide estimates of annual maintenance costs covering a period of 5 years after the opening of the exhibit.

VII. Proposal Requirements and How to Submit

Proposals must include the following in this order and conform to the format detailed below:

- A. Summary of your firm's background, resources, and relevant experience (max 2 pages).
- B. Examples from past projects of a similar size and scope. If possible, these should include projects carried through to actual exhibit installation. Each project's square foot costs listing design fees separately and time to complete should be included. If projects of similar size and scope have not been completed by the Designer, then include examples that are felt to be the most relevant in demonstrating your firm's ability to complete this project (maximum 5 pages).
- C. Statement of firm's design philosophy and capabilities. How do you view the relationships between designers, architects and clients? What arrangements have worked out best for you on past projects? Design firms without extensive experience in large, immersive history exhibits should be sure to specify in this section why they feel they can handle this project (maximum 3 pages).
- D. References from past projects of a similar size and scope, preferably matching those projects used as examples in VII-B (above) (1 page).
- E. Proposed schedule for completing the master plan, including project stages, milestones and payments (maximum 2 pages).
- F. Proposed budget for completing the master plan by major categories. (max 2 pages).
- G. Current workload. If selected as the Designer for this project, how does it fit into your firm's current scheduled activities? (1 page).
- H. Names and resumes of key personnel that will be *directly involved* in the project (maximum 2 pages per person).
- I. Supporting materials of the firm's choosing (maximum 10 pages). (Not to exceed the equivalent of ten 8.5" x 11" pages if including brochures or catalogues).

FORMAT

1. One signed original and four (4) complete copies of the proposal must be delivered to Midway Village & Museum Center by 5 pm, Tuesday, March 1st, 2005.
2. The five (5) copies should be sealed in one package with the following clearly marked on the outside of the package: "SFM Exhibit Design Proposal."

3. All pages (which should be 8.5" x 11") should have margins of at least 1" on all edges and should not use font smaller than 10 pt. Sheets printed on both sides will be counted as 2 pages.
4. Proposals should be collated as noted above.
5. Proposals that fail to match this format will be rejected.

VIII. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be judged primarily on the submitting firm's past success in creating immersive, interactive history exhibits on time and within budget. However, consideration will also be given to firms that have a proven track record of outstanding history exhibit design even if they do not have extensive experience in immersive environments. In such cases these firms will need to demonstrate the expertise and resources they feel will allow them to successfully complete such projects. In all cases, preference will be given to the proposal that the Museum feels will best help it achieve the Project Outcomes and Measures of Success for the completed exhibit that are detailed in Section IV above.

IX. Schedule of Deadlines and Expected Date of Award

- Friday, January 14th, 2005:
Firms planning to submit a proposal must send a letter to Midway Village & Museum Center postmarked by this date indicating their intention to do so. This letter should include the name, address, telephone and email of the person responsible for preparing the proposal.

NOTE: All firms that have notified the Museum of their intent to submit a proposal will be copied by email the answers to any project-related questions submitted by other firms preparing their own proposals.

- Wednesday, February 23rd, 2005
All project-related questions must be received by the Museum by 5 pm CST.
- Tuesday, March 1st, 2005:
Sealed proposals must be received by Midway Village by 5 pm CST.
- Wednesday, March 2nd, 2005
All proposals will be unsealed.
- Wednesday, March 9th, 2005:
Firms selected for interviews will be contacted by this date.
- Monday, March 14th, 2005:
Interviews of short-listed firms will begin.
- Notification of the Designer selected to participate in the project made by mid-April.

X. Midway Village & Museum Center Project Personnel

Questions about the project or proposal submission requirements should be addressed to:

David Byrnes, President
Midway Village & Museum Center
6799 Guilford Rd.
Rockford, IL 61107
(815) 397-9112
Or by email to DaveB@MidwayVillage.com. (preferred)